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Congress of the United States

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INDEPENDENT

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging
Threats, and International Relations

From: Christopher Shays 
Chairman

Date: May 5, 2005

Subject: Briefing memo for May 10th Subcommittee hearing

Attached find the briefing memo required by Committee rules for the hearing on Tuesday, May 10, 2005 entitled, *Overseas Security: Hardening Soft Targets*. The hearing will convene at 2:00 p.m. in room 2154 Rayburn House Office Building.

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BERNARD SANDERS, VERMONT,
INDEPENDENT

May 5, 2005

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations

From: Thomas Costa, Professional Staff 

Re: Briefing memo for the hearing *Overseas Security: Hardening Soft Targets* scheduled for Tuesday, May 10, 2005 at 2:00 p.m. in room 2154 Rayburn House Office Building.

PURPOSE OF THE HEARING

To examine the threats facing US personnel and their families overseas, especially those facing them outside embassy compounds as so-called soft targets.

HEARING ISSUES

1. What is the status of Department of State efforts to develop a comprehensive strategy to protect U.S. personnel stationed abroad and their families outside of embassies?
2. What is the status of Department of State efforts to implement recommendations to protect soft targets?

BACKGROUND

In part due to the Africa embassy bombings, the attacks of 9/11, and the terrorist attack on Russian school children, US personnel overseas from agencies across the federal government are facing a new safety environment in which they must conduct diplomacy and other government business. The Congress and the State Department have responded to these developments by funding a vigorous capital improvement program to build new embassies and enhance the security of older overseas buildings. However, most attacks against US personnel overseas do not take place at embassies, but at their homes or traveling to work away from the security of embassy walls. And yet US personnel are not the only so-called “soft targets.” Their families are also at risk. In this new security environment, it is critical we provide US personnel and their families with the best safety training and security measures possible.

Since 1968, 32 embassy officials have been attacked and 23 killed in terrorist attacks outside the embassy. As the State Department continues to improve security at US embassies, there is concern terrorist groups will change their focus to softer targets. (**Attachment 1, Highlights**)

The hearing will focus on the results of the new Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, *Overseas Security: State Department Has Not Fully Implemented Key Measures to Protect U.S. Officials from Terrorist Attacks Outside of Embassies* (GAO-05-386), which is scheduled to be released at the hearing. According to the report, State has not fully responded to the threat facing US personnel and their dependents despite the recommendations of several reports concerning the protection of soft targets.

Non-sensitive portions of the “Sensitive But Unclassified” (SBU) draft of the GAO report are attached to the briefing memorandum. (**Attachment 1**) The attachment includes only the distribution letter from GAO, the cover page, and Highlights page of the report. The report is marked “Sensitive But Unclassified” (SBU) due to GAO use of source materials considered by the providing agency to be unsuitable for wide public release. Offices seeking access to the full report should contact Thomas M. Costa at 202-225-2548. A non-SBU version of the report will be available at the hearing.

Inman Report

In 1985, the Inman Report, Report of the Secretary of State's Advisory Panel on Overseas Security, the first modern and authoritative report on protecting US personnel abroad was released. The report focused on Department organization, security personnel training, diplomatic efforts to prevent terrorism, protection of foreign dignitaries, alert systems, physical security standards, and the need for new embassies. Much of the report went unheeded until the Africa embassy bombings a decade later. The report also briefly addressed the matter of soft targets:

The Department of State has developed programs designed to inform all personnel about the hazards posed by terrorism and other forms of physical violence, including criminal activities, and to train them in ways to protect themselves. From the recruiting brochure, which makes passing reference to the fact that Overseas service may involve security risks to personnel and their families to a full day orientation program devoted solely to security considerations, continual efforts are made to prepare personnel for the hazards they may face abroad. In addition, security concerns, guidelines for personal awareness and conduct, contingency planning and similar matters are discussed in some detail where appropriate in the many training courses offered by the Department's Foreign Service Institute. These include orientation and training programs for Chiefs of Mission, for Deputy Chiefs of Mission, for Administrative Officers, the Basic and Mid-Level Officer training courses, emergency action simulations, and a variety of orientation programs.

The results so far, however, seem to be mixed. While most personnel take the situation seriously and conduct themselves accordingly, there is reason to believe some seem to think "It can't happen to me". Too many employees assigned abroad, aware that political violence is endemic in some parts of the world, seem to disregard it as a personal hazard, especially if they are not posted to one of the crisis areas.

The Panel recognizes that it is extremely difficult to inspire and to sustain a high degree of security awareness and sensitivity, particularly when most of us are seldom if ever directly exposed to violence. Yet, in view of the increasing incidence of terrorism and, more significantly, the increasingly grave impact of such events on our foreign policy objectives, the Department must increase its efforts to sensitize all personnel to this problem. Recruitment literature, for example, such as the brochure, *Foreign Service Careers*, should include a more graphic description of the hazards of political violence to our personnel abroad and of the significant additional responsibilities and stresses this places on them. **(Web Resource 1)**

The report also discussed a well-received “Coping with Violence” program, which it recommended be expanded and offered to non-State Department personnel overseas. (**Web Resource 1**) Recommendations for additional training also were noted:

It is also recommended that personnel destined for high threat posts be offered the Hands on training in firearms and evasive driving that was given in the past. Finally, all personnel involved in this program as instructors should be given appropriate training in instructional techniques. (**Web Resource 1**)

Department of State Soft Target Responsibilities

22 USC Sec. 4802 establishes many of the security responsibilities of the Secretary of State, including

(1) The Secretary of State shall develop and implement (in consultation with the heads of other Federal agencies having personnel or missions abroad where appropriate and within the scope of the resources made available) policies and programs, including funding levels and standards, to provide for the security of United States Government operations of a diplomatic nature and foreign government operations of a diplomatic nature in the United States. Such policies and programs shall include -

(A) protection of all United States Government personnel on official duty abroad (other than Voice of America correspondents on official assignment and those personnel under the command of a United States area military commander) and their accompanying dependents.... (**Web Resource 2**)

Security responsibilities are expected to include establishment and operation of protective functions abroad, emergency planning, and personnel training among other functions. (**Web Resource 2**)

In addition to security briefings before being stationed abroad and upon arriving, the Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) and Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAH) cover many security procedures Americans abroad should take.¹ One example of these procedures is found in 12 FAH-7 H-532 of the U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs Handbook, which establishes the need for surveillance detection training in order “to enhance the prospects of preventing a terrorist attack by recognizing pre-

¹ Many of these precautions are understandably sensitive and this memorandum does not address those not in the public domain at the following State Department website:
<http://foia.state.gov/regs/search.asp>.

operational hostile surveillance directed against mission facilities and personnel.”
(Web Resource 3)

The Bureau of Diplomatic Security also has published *Personal Security--At Home, On the Street, While Traveling* (**Web Resource 4**). The booklet notes:

For Americans living overseas, the most serious obstacle to personal safety is an attitude of complacency or fatalism. “It can’t happen to me” and “if it’s going to happen, it’s going to happen” is dangerous thinking.

Recent political events throughout the world have changed--but not necessarily diminished--the threats you face. Today, the most prevalent threat you face overseas is crime.

A criminal attack against you or your family can take place at any post, as can a fire or other disaster. However, you can influence what happens to you by assuming more responsibility for your own security. (**Web Resource 4**)

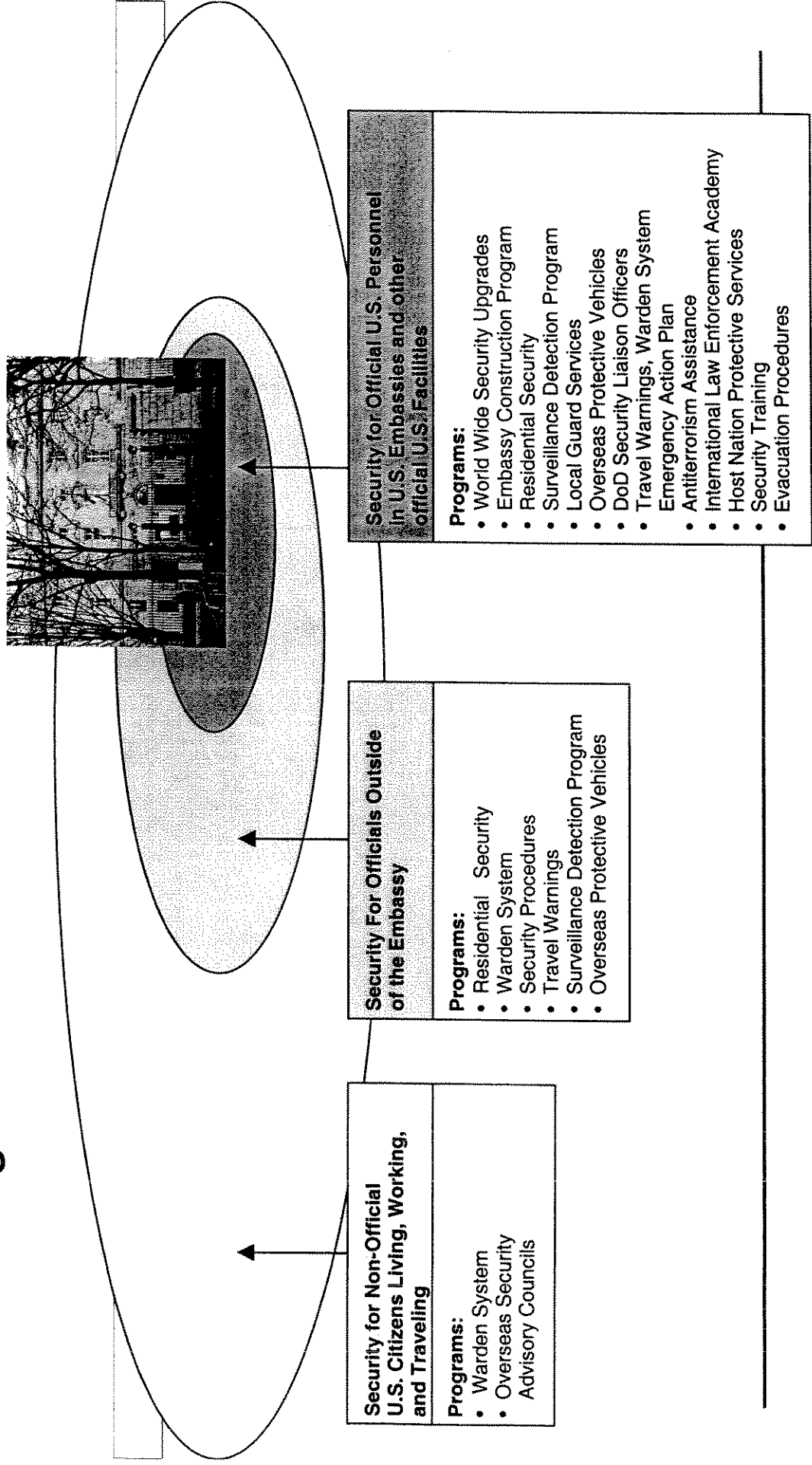
The booklet goes on to detail several practical and simple measures US personnel stationed abroad can take to increase their security in areas such as residential security (including establishing a safehaven and home security while you are away), personal security while traveling, personal security in hotels, fire safety at home (including smoke detectors, exit drills, and preventative measures), security do’s for children, letter and parcel bombs, carjacking, surveillance, and sexual assault prevention. Examples of advice include, “vary daily routines; avoid predictable patterns” and “if you observe any unusual activity, report it immediately to your RSO.” (**Web Resource 4**)

In addition to written procedures and security awareness training, the Department runs many programs to protect Americans abroad, most of which are noted on the GAO graphic attached.

The interagency Overseas Security Policy Board “is responsible for developing, coordinating, and promoting uniform policies and standards” for all non-military U.S. personnel abroad. (**Attachment 1, p. 8**)

Should a terrorist event occur against non-military U.S. personnel or property, State creates Accountability Review Boards (ARBs), the most well known of which was that headed by former Admiral Crowe in response to the Africa Embassy bombings. (**Attachment 1, p. 9**)

Protecting Americans Abroad



Congress Urges Protection of Soft Targets

In 2002, Congress acknowledged an attack on a church frequented by Americans in Pakistan raised concerns about the safety of soft targets. Appropriations report language called on “the State Department to formulate a strategy for addressing, both in the long term and in the short term, threats to locales that are either frequented by Americans or symbolic of the United States.” Concerns for the safety of American schools was particularly noted and the Department was asked “to provide both temporary and long term security enhancements for locations that are affiliated with the U.S. by virtue of the activities and individuals they accommodate.” (**Web Resource 5**)

In 2003, the Department was asked “to undertake a review of the security of all overseas schools attended by the children of non-military United States government employees” and “address such vulnerabilities.” (**Web Resource 6**) Congress also acknowledged concern of “the more frequent targeting by terrorists of locations that are not official United States facilities, but are tied to the United States... so-called “soft targets”. (**Web Resource 7**)

In September 2003, Congress expanded on its concerns in late of the May 2003 attacks on American housing in Saudi Arabia.

In fiscal year 2003, the Committee directed the Department of State to formulate a strategy for addressing threats to overseas facilities that are frequented by Americans or symbolic of the United States, but that are not official U.S. facilities. The Committee that year provided \$15,000,000 for the Department to begin addressing the security vulnerabilities of these so-called ‘soft targets’. The recommendation for this initiative for fiscal year 2004 is \$40,000,000.

The May 2003, suicide attacks against Western housing compounds in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia highlight the growing problem of soft targets. The attacks, which killed 10 Americans, were directed not at the U.S. Embassy, but at the employees and their families of a U.S.-based company. The attacks demonstrate that an inverse relationship exists between the security of our embassies and the security of non-official facilities: as our embassies become more heavily fortified, non-official U.S.-affiliated facilities overseas become more attractive targets to terrorists. The Riyadh attacks underscore the urgent need for the Department to complete its strategy for addressing the problem of soft targets. The Committee directs that the strategy examine the problem of threats to properties owned or controlled by private and commercial U.S. entities. The strategy should include guidelines for how posts will interface and coordinate with representatives of U.S.

businesses operating in high-threat areas to ensure that the Department is providing them as much support as is necessary and feasible.

The Committee continues to be extremely concerned about the safety of American schools abroad, including international schools attended by American children. Accordingly, within the funding made available to address the security vulnerabilities of soft targets, \$20,000,000 is for security enhancements at overseas schools. These funds shall be made available, on the basis of need, to overseas schools that do not receive financial assistance from the U.S. Department of State, as well as those that do receive such financial assistance. Funds shall be used to provide security enhancements desired by the schools, including contract security guards and rapid response teams. **(Web Resource 8)**

These concerns were again highlighted in September 2004.

Recent attacks against American housing compounds overseas and places of worship frequented by Americans demonstrate that an inverse relationship exists between the security of our embassies and the security of non-official facilities: as our embassies become more heavily fortified, non-official U.S.-affiliated facilities overseas become more attractive targets to terrorists. In response to the clear need to enhance the Department's ability to protect these so-called 'soft targets', the Committee in fiscal year 2002 provided \$15,000,000 for this purpose. The recommendation for this initiative for fiscal year 2005 is not less than \$27,000,000. The Committee commends the Department for recognizing and requesting funding for this critical need. While the Department, specifically the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, has been extremely responsive to the Committee's directives concerning the security of housing and American schools, the Department has yet to submit an overarching strategy for addressing the problem of soft targets. The Committee directs the Bureau of Diplomatic Security to take the lead on developing a comprehensive, sustained strategy for addressing this problem. The strategy shall be submitted to the Committee for approval no later than June 1, 2005.

The Committee continues to be extremely concerned about the safety of American schools and international schools attended by American children overseas. Accordingly, within the funding provided to address the security vulnerabilities of soft targets, not less than \$10,000,000 is for security enhancements at overseas schools. These funds shall be made available, on the basis of need, to overseas schools that do not receive financial assistance from the Department of State, as well as those that do receive such financial assistance. The Committee understands that the Department is in the process of surveying the security needs of non-grantee schools. The Department is directed to report to the Committee on the results of this survey. It is the goal of the Committee that all international schools attended by American children shall have certain 'baseline' security measures in place as soon as practicable. **(Web Resource 9)**

H.R. 4818, which became Public Law 108-477 in December 2004, included \$15 million to secure and protect soft targets, \$10 million of which was for security at overseas schools. (**Web Resource 10**)

DISCUSSION OF HEARING ISSUES

1. What is the status of Department of State efforts to develop a comprehensive strategy to protect U.S. personnel stationed abroad and their families outside of embassies?

As work to bolster the defenses of our embassies and missions abroad progresses, it is more critical that we begin to focus on softer targets, because it is clear the terrorists already have. As noted above, State was asked by Congress to specifically address soft targets beginning in 2002. However, GAO reports State “has not developed a comprehensive strategy that clearly identifies safety and security requirements and resources needed to protect U.S. official [and] their families... abroad from terrorist threats outside the embassy.” (**Attachment 1, p. 10**) In addition, GAO reports State has only “recently initiated an effort to develop a soft target strategy.” (**Attachment 1, p. 4**)

In response, Diplomatic Security officials at State have suggested they are unclear on the extent of their responsibilities, noting the increase in their overall responsibilities as a limiting factor and the unprecedented and murky legal nature of using U.S. funds to bulwark private locations or places of worship. State suggested to GAO that additional authorization language to extend their responsibilities to protect soft targets would be necessary. (**Attachment 1, p. 11-12**)

State was supposed to have formed a working group in January 2005 to begin development of a comprehensive soft target strategy. State Department witnesses are expected to discuss the progress of this working group at the hearing.

2. What is the status of Department of State efforts to implement recommendations to protect soft targets?

Many of the areas specifically noted in the 1985 Inman Report, remain inadequately addressed decades later. In May 2002 testimony, former-American Foreign Service Association President John K. Naland, noted:

Mr. Chairman, in the area of security, there is one concern to which we wish to draw the Subcommittee's attention. When both the Accountability Review Board and the Overseas Presence Advisory Panel made their recommendations, the emphasis was placed on protecting government facilities abroad from future terrorist attacks. There was always concern, though a generally unspoken concern that, as we "hardened" our missions, terrorists would go after Americans, and particularly representatives of the U.S. government, in "softer" targets. The recent terrorist bombing of the church in Islamabad that killed a member of the embassy staff and her teenage daughter puts a harsh light on that concern. We believe the concept of embassy security needs to be expanded to encompass the embassy community. In part, AFSA believes that this will entail the continued hiring of security professionals and funding to move from a protective, defensive posture to a more aggressive preventive approach to security. We encourage the Subcommittee to join AFSA in engaging the Department in identifying practical solutions to the expanded threat to Americans and to American personnel abroad. **(Web Resource 11)**

The Inman report and several ARBs have recommended State provide mandatory and better security training to identify surveillance or escape attacks. State has agreed with these recommendations and provided security briefings to all staff. Nevertheless, while a hands-on Diplomatic Security Antiterrorism Course (DSAC) – a course that provides training to identify surveillance, counterterrorism driving, and emergency first aid – is available, it still is not mandatory, there is not enough funding to expand it to all personnel, and many employees are not given the time to participate in the class. Moreover, only 10 to 15 percent of State Department officials have participated in the class and even fewer from other agencies. **(Attachment 1, p. 16-17)**

State has also failed to implement a system to insure compliance with personal security procedures. State argues there is no way to determine if US personnel are following procedures outside of the embassy because security outside of the embassy is primarily a personal responsibility. According to GAO, what little effort there is to promote compliance is largely ignored by US personnel. Moreover, personnel were unaware of changes to personal security procedures. **(Attachment 1, p. 19-21)**

State has begun a multi-phase program aimed at protecting schools with the dependents of US personnel. The program began with hardening Department-sponsored schools and included shatter resistant window film, direct radio communication with the embassy, and public address systems. The second phase

will look at other security weaknesses at Department-sponsored schools. Phase three will mirror phase one for non Department-sponsored schools attended by dependents of US personnel and the fourth phase will likewise mirror two for those schools. However, State remains unclear on the extent to which they are expected and will be able to harden schools. Posts also have been slow in identifying eligible schools. GAO also noted another concern the Department has labeled as Sensitive But Unclassified. (**Attachment 1, p. 23-27**)

State runs a Residential Security program at State-sponsored housing with standards set by the threat level of the post. The threat level is based on political violence and crime, not terrorism. The program usually includes basic security hardware, access control measures, and local guards. In response to the Africa embassy bombings, State also run surveillance detection teams to monitor residential areas. These teams are occasionally used to help monitor other areas or official functions, though some State officials would like more flexibility in using the teams. Despite these effective measures, many posts are also considering changes to their housing footprint in order to better meet changing terror threats. (**Attachment 1, p. 27-31**)

While the primary responsibility of Diplomatic Security officials will remain the mission compounds and those on them, the Department must do more to comply with congressional intent and protect soft targets. The Department needs to develop a comprehensive strategy for protecting soft targets, find the funding for and make mandatory more extensive antiterrorism training, and follow through on existing recommendations.

WITNESSES

PANEL ONE

Mr. Jess Ford

Director
International Affairs and Trade Division
U.S. Government Accountability Office

Mr. Greg Starr

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Countermeasures
Bureau of Diplomatic Security and Foreign Missions
U.S. Department of State

Amb. Prudence Bushnell

Dean
School of Leadership and Management
The George P. Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center
U.S. Department of State

Mr. Keith Miller

Director
Office of Overseas Schools
U.S. Department of State

PANEL TWO

Amb. Wesley W. Egan, Ret.

Chairman
2003 Foley Accountability Review Board

Amb. John W. Limbert

President
American Foreign Service Association

Mr. Joseph Petro

Executive Vice President and Managing Director
Citigroup Security and Investigative Services
Citigroup

WITNESS TESTIMONY

Witnesses were told the hearing will focus on the results of the new GAO report, *Overseas Security: State Department Has Not Fully Implemented Key Measures to Protect U.S. Officials from Terrorist Attacks Outside of Embassies* (GAO-05-386), to be released at the hearing.

Jess Ford was asked to address the background, findings, and recommendations of the new GAO report.

State Department witnesses were asked to respond to the GAO report. In addition, Mr. Starr is expected to characterize the nature of security programs for soft targets, current challenges, and efforts to improve security programs; Ambassador Bushnell is expected to address security lessons learned from the Africa embassy bombings and efforts to increase security training and crisis management; and Mr. Carney is expected to discuss how overseas schools are being included in embassy security planning, the challenges of doing so, and what more needs to be done to better secure overseas schools.

Ambassador Egan was asked to address the findings and recommendations of the 2003 Foley Accountability Review Board (ARB), including the need for an independent panel of experts to conduct a comprehensive review of all State policies concerning personal security abroad, and additional observations he has made since completion of that work.

Ambassador Limbert was asked to address the concerns of the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) about the safety of US personnel and their families overseas, any programs AFSA has proposed to increase security awareness and safety training, and the challenges that soft targets continue to face.

Mr. Petro was asked to address the threats facing soft targets overseas, continuing challenges to protecting soft targets, and suggestions for increasing the safety of soft targets, especially private sector practices that might be applied to protecting US personnel and their dependents.

WEB RESOURCES

1. The Inman Report, Report of the Secretary of State's, Advisory Panel on Overseas Security, 1985, <http://www.fas.org/irp/threat/inman/index.html>.
2. 22 USC Sec. 4802, <http://uscode.house.gov/uscode-cgi/fastweb.exe?getdoc+uscview+t21t25+3202+0++%28%29%20%20A>.
3. U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs Handbook Volume 12 Handbook 7 – Local Guard Program, 12 FAH-7 H-530, <http://foia.state.gov/masterdocs/12FAH07/LGP0530.PDF>.
4. Personal Security--At Home, On the Street, While Traveling, Released by the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, <http://www.state.gov/m/ds/rls/rpt/19773.htm>.
5. Senate Report 107-218, Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State, the Judiciary, and Related Agencies Appropriation Bill, 2003, Report to accompany S. 2778, July 24, 2002, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/cpquery/T?&report=sr218&dbname=cp107&>.
6. House of Representatives Report 108-10, Making Further Continuing Appropriations for the Fiscal Year 2003, and for Other Purposes, Conference Report to accompany H.J. Res. 2, February 13, 2003, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/cpquery/T?&report=hr010&dbname=cp108&>.
7. Senate Report 108-33, Making Supplemental Appropriations to Support Department of Defense operations in Iraq, Department of Homeland Security, and Related Efforts for Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 2003, and for Other Purposes, Report to accompany S. 762, April 1, 2003, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/cpquery/T?&report=sr033&dbname=cp108&>.
8. Senate Report 108-144, Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State, the Judiciary, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2004, Report to accompany S. 1585, September 5, 2003, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/cpquery/T?&report=sr144&dbname=cp108&>.
9. Senate Report 108-344, Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State, the Judiciary, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2005, Report to

accompany S. 2809, September 15, 2004, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/cpquery/T?&report=sr344&dbname=cp108&>.

10. Public Law 108-477, 108th Congress, http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=108_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ447.108.

11. Testimony Submitted by the American Foreign Service Association to the Senate Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State, and the Judiciary, Presented by John K. Naland, President, May 1, 2002, <http://www.afsa.org/congress/050102testimony.cfm>

ATTACHMENTS

1. *Overseas Security: State Department Has Not Fully Implemented Key Measures to Protect U.S. Officials from Terrorist Attacks Outside of Embassies*, DRAFT report, United States Government Accountability Office, GAO-05-386.

The attachment includes only the distribution letter from GAO, the cover page, and Highlights page of the report. The report is marked "Sensitive But Unclassified" (SBU) due to GAO use of source materials considered by the providing agency to be unsuitable for wide public release. Offices seeking access to the full report should contact Thomas M. Costa at 202-225-2548. A non-SBU version of the report will be available at the hearing.

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G A O

Accountability • Integrity • Reliability

United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

March 10, 2005

The Honorable Christopher Shays
Chairman, Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International
Relations
Committee on Government Reform
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

At your request we have been reviewing State Department's protection of soft targets. We sent State a draft of our report, titled *Overseas Security: State Department Has Not Fully Implemented Key Measures to Protect U.S. Officials from Terrorist Attacks Outside of Embassies* for its review and comment, and their comments are expected on March 30, 2005. At your request, and in accordance with our protocols, enclosed is a copy of the draft report for your information.

As the cover page indicates, the draft is subject to revision. Therefore, it must be safeguarded to prevent premature disclosure. Please do not show or release its contents for any purpose. This copy and all others belong to the U.S. Government Accountability Office and must be returned on demand. In addition, this draft is currently marked Sensitive But Unclassified, and should be treated with the appropriate safeguards. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

Jess T. Ford
Director, IAT

Enclosure



Sensitive But Unclassified

United States Government Accountability Office

Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations, Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

April 29, 2005

OVERSEAS SECURITY

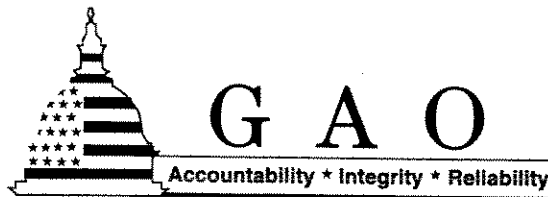
DRAFT

State Department Has Not Fully Implemented Key Measures to Protect U.S. Officials from Terrorist Attacks Outside of Embassies

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GAO
Accountability Integrity Reliability
Highlights

Highlights of GAO-05-386, a report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations, Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

U.S. citizens and government officials living and working overseas are at risk from terrorist threats. Since 1968, 32 embassy officials have been attacked and 23 killed in terrorist attacks outside the embassy. As State Department continues to improve security at U.S. embassies, terrorist groups are likely to focus on "soft" targets—such as homes, schools, and places of worship. Recent terrorist attacks against housing complexes in Saudi Arabia, a school in Russia, and places of worship in Turkey illustrate this growing threat. We determined whether State has a strategy for soft target protection; assessed State's protection of U.S. officials and their families while traveling to and from work and while attending schools and other popular gathering places; and described issues related to protection at their residences.

What GAO Recommends

We are recommending that the Secretary of State develop a soft targets strategy that takes funding and legal limitations into consideration; develop counter-terrorism training for officials serving at high and critical threat posts; and fully implement its personal security accountability system for embassy officials.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-386.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Jess T. Ford at (202) 512-4128 or fordj@gao.gov.

OVERSEAS SECURITY

State Department Has Not Fully Implemented Key Measures to Protect U.S. Officials from Terrorist Attacks Outside Embassies

What GAO Found

State has a number of programs and activities designed to protect U.S. officials and their families outside of the embassy, including security briefings, protection at schools and residences, and surveillance detection. However, State has not developed a comprehensive strategy that clearly identifies safety and security requirements and resources needed to protect U.S. officials, their families, or other Americans abroad from terrorist threats outside the embassy. State officials raised a number of challenges related to developing and implementing such a strategy. They also indicated that they have recently initiated an effort to develop a soft targets strategy. As part of this effort, State officials said they will need to address and resolve a number of legal and financial issues.

Three State initiated investigations into terrorist attacks against U.S. officials outside of embassies found that the officials lacked the necessary hands-on training to help counter the attack. The investigations recommended that State provide hands-on training in such areas as route analysis, surveillance detection, and counter-terrorist driving techniques. They also recommended State implement accountability procedures to ensure that officials follow security procedures consistently. After each of these investigations, State reported to Congress that it planned to implement the recommendations, yet we found that State's hands-on training course is not required, the accountability procedures have not been effectively implemented, and key embassy officials are not trained to implement State's counterterrorism procedures.

State instituted a program in 2003 to improve security at schools, but its scope has not yet been fully determined. In fiscal years 2003 and 2004 Congress earmarked \$29.8 million for State to address security vulnerabilities against soft targets, particularly at overseas schools. The multi-phase program provides basic security hardware to protect U.S. officials and their families at schools and some recreation centers from terrorist threats. However, during our visits to posts, regional security officers were unclear about which schools could qualify for security assistance.

State's program to protect U.S. officials and their families at their residences is primarily designed to deter crime, not terrorism. The Residential Security program includes basic security hardware and local guards, which State officials said provide effective deterrence against crime, though only limited deterrence against a terrorist attack. To minimize the risk and consequences of a residential terrorist attack, some posts we visited limited the number of U.S. officials living in specific apartment buildings. To provide greater protection against terrorist attacks, some posts we visited used surveillance detection teams in residential areas.